

# Update:



**Soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division continued to hone their skills as the search for a diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis went on.**



SPC Adam Neulken (all three this page)

# Preparing

**Story by Heike Hasenauer**

It was ironic that Feb. 14 — the day observed in the United States and other Western nations as Valentine's day, a day to express love and affection — should be the day enemies met on the soil of their respective countries to decide the fate of armies and civilians.

It was the date United Nations weapons inspectors presented yet another report to the Security Council about their findings in Iraq. Meantime, in Iraq, a government council there conducted a critical meeting that Mohammed Aldouri, the Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations, said was to adopt national legislation banning weapons of mass destruction.

The U.S. media expected war to break out in the tense Persian Gulf region any day, following Eid Al-Adha, the three-day Muslim holiday commemorating Abraham's agreement to sacrifice his son at God's command.

U.S. and coalition troops and supplies continued pouring into Kuwait days before half of that country was to be designated a training area and made off-limits to the local population. "Warp speed," was how one official described the buildup that was so intense, in fact, that the Department of Defense initiated the use of commercial airliners to transport troops under the Civilian Reserve Air Fleet program, first used during the 1991 Gulf War.



**Two 3rd ID soldiers are silhouetted by the setting sun at one of the many U.S. camps in the Kuwaiti desert.**

**Continuous training in chemical decontamination remained high on the priority list for soldiers throughout the Gulf region.**

# for War

By late February, DOD officials reported there were 200,000 U.S. troops in the Gulf region, about half of them in Kuwait. Some 4,000 troops were positioned in Turkey. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had ordered the deployment of two 7,000-member Marine amphibious task forces and the Army's 3rd and 4th Infantry Divisions to the Gulf, both with hundreds of M1A1 Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.

On the home front, some 39,000 more Reservists had been activated, increasing the total number of U.S. Reservists on active duty to 150,000, DOD reports indicated.

Across America and around the world, the ominous words purported to be those of Osama bin Laden — sent via audiotape to the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera Arabic-language TV network — fueled the resolve of countries allied with America to squelch those who would carry out bin Laden's proposed threats.

In the tape, a call to arms for Muslims to fight against any U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the al-Qaeda leader urged Iraqi Muslims to fight alongside Saddam Hussein. He also offered his followers battle strategies that would inflict the largest number of American casualties, said CIA director George Tenet.

Bin Laden urged suicide bombers to attack apartment buildings, shopping malls — anyplace that would strike the greatest blow to the heart of America.

Tenet, in a report to the Senate Armed Services Committee, said: "There's no limitation on what al Qaeda will do. We've entered a new era of weaponry ... a new world of proliferation." He said threats to

America include chemical, biological and radiological attacks.

**A**t home, people began stocking up on food, water and duct tape so they could seal windows and doors of their homes should a chemical or biological attack occur. To safeguard U.S. troops, officials required all military personnel de-

ployed to the Gulf region to be vaccinated against smallpox and anthrax.

As a determined nation grew more alert to potential attacks, a few false alarms temporarily rattled nerves further. On Feb. 12, a major bridge crossing the Potomac River in Washington, D.C., closed for hours during the rush-hour commute after a commuter reported a suspicious, unattended package on the bridge. A similar incident took place on a New York City bridge.

U.S. officials had responded to a heightened terrorist-threat level on Feb. 7 — when the Homeland Security Council raised the national threat level from yellow to high-alert orange — based on intelligence data. Officials wasted no time in deploying Humvees carrying Avenger antiaircraft systems to protect Washington, and increased fighter patrols in the skies over the nation's capital and New York.

Daily, as America prepared for war and to protect its interests at home and abroad, soldiers and civilians at home — and far from home — waited for what was to come. □



Heike Hasenauer

**The soldiers pouring into the Gulf region married up with equipment that had arrived earlier or was drawn from prepositioned stocks.**



Steve Harding

**Live-fire exercises, like this one near Camp New Jersey in Kuwait, helped keep soldiers ready for combat.**